

ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE

The VICE PRESIDENT. If the Senator-designate will now present himself at the desk, the Chair will administer the oath of office.

The Senator-designate, PETE RICKETTS, escorted by Mrs. FISCHER, advanced to the desk of the Vice President; the oath prescribed by law was administered to him by the Vice President; and he subscribed to the oath in the Official Oath Book.

The VICE PRESIDENT. Congratulations. (Applause, Senators rising.)

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

MONTEREY PARK SHOOTING

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today the thoughts of the Senate are with the people of Monterey Park, CA, as they heal from this weekend's tragic and terrible shooting. What should have been a weekend of joy and celebration within the AAPI community as they celebrate the Lunar New Year, turned into another occasion of grief and mourning.

I spoke yesterday with the sheriff of Los Angeles County and assured him that the Federal Government is ready to provide whatever assistance they need right now. While first responders are still investigating the causes of this incident, it is clear that the prevalence of guns in our country have made tragedies like this one too frequent. While the Senate passed bipartisan gun safety legislation last year—and that was a very welcome move—more should be done.

My thoughts are with all the families and the loved ones of the victims of this insidious attack. I thank all the first responders and even the private citizens who responded quickly to stop the shooter and prevent even more lives from tragically being cut short.

118TH CONGRESS

Madam President, I want to also welcome our new colleague from Nebraska and wish him the best.

Now, this week, for the first time in the 118th Congress, both Chambers gavel into session to begin anew the work of serving the American people. It is a new era here in Congress, an era of divided government where both parties will have to demonstrate they can work together to solve our Nation's problems. Democrats begin the 118th Congress with an open hand of cooperation, and I urge my Republican colleagues to respond in kind so we can hit the ground running.

We have a lot of difficult and important work ahead of us, perhaps none more important than working together to raise the debt ceiling and protecting the full faith and credit of the United States. In America, when it is time to pay the bills, we have followed through

on our obligations without any exception.

In the months to come, I expect we are going to hear a lot from our Republican colleagues about the debt ceiling. So let me begin by making a few things perfectly clear at the onset.

First, few issues require more bipartisanship, cooperation, and seriousness than making sure that America is able to pay its debts on time. At stake is the health of our economy and the very stability of the global financial system. Should the U.S. default on its debt, the consequences could be severe, and it is going to affect just about every average American family. This is not some esoteric issue that is just abstract and way up there in the clouds. It is going to affect all of us.

Listen to what could happen if we default: Interest rates will go up on mortgages, on car loans, on credit cards; pensions, the money people have put aside, will lose billions, so will IRAs and 401Ks, in all likelihood. Home values will decline because when mortgage interest rates go up people are willing to pay less for homes. That is a lot of money for lots of people. For many people, their home is their rock. It is all they have. By playing brinksmanship, some of the MAGA Republicans on the other side of the aisle, on the other side in the House, are risking just that.

So, again, this is not an abstract issue. Real Americans will see real dollars from so much of what they own disappear from their pensions, their IRAs, their home value. Merely approaching a default could raise costs on everything from mortgages and car loans to credit card interest rates.

So it is going to hurt average families. This is not an abstract argument. And as the months go on, and as we get closer and closer to the day that we have to act, the American people will see this, and we are going to make sure of that.

Second, raising the debt ceiling has consistently been a bipartisan responsibility for decades. Neither party has played brinksmanship. Since 1960, the debt ceiling has been raised approximately 80 times under both Republican and Democratic administrations, under both unified and divided government. I will note once again that while President Trump was in office and Republicans had the House and Senate, Democrats voted to raise the debt ceiling. We did it not once, not twice, but three times, including twice under Republican majorities in the House and Senate. Of course, we could have done what some MAGA Republicans want, threatening to block debt ceiling extensions unless we got our way. But we knew how badly it would hurt the American people, and we didn't do it. This time should be no different. Brinksmanship, hostage-taking, default on the debt should be off the table. Both parties should work together to ensure we can continue to

pay our debt on time, and we Democrats are ready to move quickly in order to make that happen. Indeed, we are ready to move well in advance of default, because even brinksmanship over the debt ceiling can cause serious damage to the economy and to individual American families.

Unfortunately, Madam President—unfortunately, House Republicans have kicked off their new majority by saying yes to brinksmanship, yes to hostage-taking, and yes even to risking default, all because of draconian spending cuts pushed by the hard right. House Republicans' approach to the debt ceiling is dangerous, destabilizing, and the only thing it accomplishes is making a bipartisan solution less likely. If Republicans want to show that they can govern effectively, they are off to a pretty poor start.

If House Republicans are serious about taking the debt limit hostage in exchange for spending cuts, the new rules that they adopted require them to bring a proposal to the floor of the House and show the American people precisely what kind of cuts they want to make. It is not enough to hide behind the old GOP talking points about wasteful spending. When you are in the majority, substance counts. If Republicans are talking about draconian cuts, they have an obligation to show Americans what those cuts are and let the public react. And let's let them do it now, not 6 months from now when the danger of default is much closer.

House Republicans: You voted for rules that require regular order for bringing bills to the floor. So put your proposals for debt ceiling on the floor, let the entirety of the House debate it and vote on it, and let the American people see and assess these cuts for themselves. Otherwise, Americans are going to be left with some pretty big questions.

Republicans say they want spending cuts. Well, does that mean cuts to Social Security or Medicare or childcare or Pell grants or our military or pay raises for our troops or funding police and law enforcement?

Many House Republicans are serious about cutting national defense in exchange for raising the debt ceiling. I hope they are not but many seem to be—or maybe they are pushing cuts to public health and nurses and hospitals. Whatever the case may be, Americans deserve to know what kind of cuts Republicans want to make and why they think it is worth forcing an unnecessary crisis that will hurt most American families.

Frankly, I expect the House Republicans themselves will struggle to come up with a serious answer, because deep down, they know that no matter what they propose, their cuts are likely to be deeply unpopular with the American people.

This is the central quandary of the new majority. By yielding so much to the whims of the MAGA hard right,

House Republicans have boxed themselves in and now have to choose between serving the American people or pleasing the extremists within their ranks. We are already seeing this play out when it comes to the debt ceiling. I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

WELCOMING JOHN PETER RICKETTS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Moments ago, the Senate returned to our full 100-person strength as Nebraska's new junior Senator took the oath of office.

The Cornhusker State expects a lot from its leaders. For the last 8 years, Nebraskans could rest easy knowing they had DEB FISCHER and Ben Sasse on the job here in Washington. And during that same time, of course, they also had an outstanding leader even closer to home. As Governor, PETE RICKETTS applied private-sector savvy to the work of public administration with great effect. He secured for Nebraska families and small businesses the biggest tax relief in that State's history. He championed parents' rights and defended civics education.

In the face of a global pandemic, he built the State's response on common sense—saving lives but also safeguarding livelihoods; preserving liberties and protecting kids' educations, all at the same time. The people of Nebraska chose wisely in electing and reelecting Governor RICKETTS by huge margins. And their new Governor chose wisely in sending his predecessor here to this Chamber.

I know I speak for the entire Senate in extending a warm welcome to Senator RICKETTS and his wife Susanne.

PETE, we are glad to have you here on the team.

118TH CONGRESS

Madam President, on another matter, the American people want and need this 118th Congress to work differently than the past 2 years that were just finished. We just had 2 years of one-party Democratic control, 2 years of spending us into record inflation on party-line votes, 2 years of ignoring top priorities of the American people like violent crime and open borders, two years of Senate Democrats procrastinating on basic government duties in order to push radical proposals like an unprecedented elections takeover and unlimited abortion on demand for all 9 months.

The American people put an end to that one-party government because they wanted change.

This year, the Senate leadership must not put off our most basic jobs, like intelligently funding our Federal Government and providing for our Armed Forces, before the very last minute. Basic duties like the appropriations process and the National Defense Authorization Act need more thoughtfulness, more bipartisanship, and more regular order. And they must

not be shoved into late December after the Senate Democrats waste literally months looking for ways to placate the radical left.

The American people elected a bipartisan, divided government. The country voted to change Washington. So this Chamber's Democratic leadership needs to change accordingly.

TRIBUTE TO DONNA BUTT-MOORE

Madam President, on one final matter, over the recent State work period, my team unexpectedly lost a dear friend and longtime colleague, our Eastern Kentucky field assistant Donna Butt-Moore.

Donna worked in my London, KY, field office for 14 years. She and her co-worker, Donna McClure, ran their team as a dynamic duo. They were born only a month apart. They even shared the same initials. Back in Kentucky, they were known as just "the Donnas."

And while Donna M. would travel around Eastern Kentucky, Donna B. was the rock that held down the fort at our office. She fielded calls. She greeted visitors. She solved Kentuckians' problems. Donna was endlessly patient, endlessly kind, and endlessly focused on helping constituents.

She was sweet and sometimes quiet, more of a listener than a talker, and deeply empathetic. She was the kind of person who would come to the verge of tears almost daily after reading a news article or Facebook post about somebody in need. But woe to anybody who mistook Donna's big heart for any lack of determination. If Donna wanted something—if Eastern Kentucky needed something done—she made it happen. That is why condolence notes have poured into our office and to Donna's family from all over Eastern Kentucky—all from people she helped through her public service.

Donna's work brought her into contact with important leaders, but I understand she was most excited when she had the opportunity once to snap a picture with Lee Greenwood. I understand another longtime dream was fulfilled just this last August, when her duties led Donna to ride on a Black Hawk helicopter with the Kentucky National Guard.

After each year's busy August State work period, Donna would always take a vacation on the first day of September, not to kick up her heels and take a rest but to head out into the woods and hunt with her husband. This past year, she bagged a deer all by herself.

Donna was the definition of Eastern Kentucky resourcefulness. If she heard you had some extra flowers lying around your house, she would swing by to gather them for a beautiful arrangement. If you had leftover meat in your freezer, she would want to cook it up and feed the whole neighborhood. In fact, she spent much of her time outside of the office catering parties for her friends and her neighbors.

Donna and her beloved husband Doug met later in life—fewer than 10 years

ago. It was true love from the start, and Donna quickly became a doting grandma to Doug's grandkids. She loved her brothers, Bruce and Bub. She loved her nieces and nephews. She cherished having such a dynamic family so close to home and treasured any time they could spend together.

Donna was also a woman of deep faith who looked to the Bible in every single aspect of her life. Her home and desk had signs containing just one word, "Blessed." She savored every gift she received from the Lord, and her funeral service in London last week showed how Donna Butt-Moore was herself a blessing to everyone around her.

Elaine and I and my entire staff were stunned and heartbroken to hear about Donna's passing. Friends, colleagues, and neighbors across Kentucky are grieving her loss. I am so grateful for her service to the people of our Commonwealth.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The senior Senator from Illinois.

WELCOMING JOHN PETER RICKETTS

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to begin by welcoming our newest Senator from the State of Nebraska, PETE RICKETTS.

I don't know him well, but I am sure I will come to know him. I certainly know his family. They have made their impression on the city of Chicago by purchasing the historic franchise the Chicago Cubs. They have made major investments in the city of Chicago and the State of Illinois in that pursuit. Best of all, they have virtually guaranteed that Wrigley Field is going to stay in Wrigley Field—exactly where it should be. It is one of the cathedrals of baseball in America, and the Ricketts family has made a commitment to it, which is certainly satisfying to devout baseball fans like myself.

I hope the time of the new Senator will be productive and gratifying. Work in this body can sometimes be slow and frustrating, but with patience, good things can happen.

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Madam President, 4 years ago today, as another new Congress was starting its work, America was nearing the end of the longest Federal Government shutdown in history. It was day 33 of a 35-day shutdown, a shutdown that was precipitated by President Donald Trump when he refused to sign any budget that did not include billions of dollars for what he wanted to build and call his "big, beautiful" wall on the southern border. That dysfunction and that government shutdown cost our economy billions of dollars, and it shook the confidence of many—in this country and its future—in America's ability to do the basics.

Fast-forward to the start of the last Congress 2 years ago when three of the newest Members of the Senate had just been sworn in, giving America only the second 50-50 Senate split in its history. It was a time of crises and division: the deadliest public health emergency in a